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GOD AND MAN.

The pulpit must not be confounded with the professorial chair or the lecture platform; but none the less, the preacher may not, with safety, ignore the results of that science, which is not falsely so-called. Believing thus we most willingly give up this week the space in THE CITIZEN allotted to editorial writing for the production of a thoughtful and timely discourse of the Rev. Dr. Ballantine, delivered before his congregation last Sunday morning:

DR. BALLANTINE'S SERMON.

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.—Genesis 2:7.

The prophet Isaiah, in one of his appeals to the Hebrew nation, impressively summoned them to consider their humble origin, from an emigrant wayfarer, such as Abraham was (the word Hebrew means an emigrant, or a man from across on the other side, whether of desert or sea), by the figure of inviting the proud stones of a building to come and look into the hole of the pit whence they were quarried. "As stones lie unknown, helpless, hopeless, trodden over and despised, until the builder lifts them to the light and makes something of them, and as when lifted they should not forget that they are still akin to those that are left, so ye Hebrews, come and look down into the quarry, come see the rock whence ye were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye were digged."

Thus it has occurred to me that it may be spiritually wholesome for us occasionally, and perhaps as well as ever at this time, to consider our origin as creatures—"the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground."

Concerning the opening chapters of this book of Genesis, from one of which this text is taken, great controversies have recently arisen and are still continued, as you know; controversies as respects their authorship and date, as also regarding their proper interpretation, whether as literal history, or as epic poetry, or as pictorial mythology. I am not indifferent to the controversies; yet recognizing the fact that such questions cannot be settled by offhand, sweeping declarations of ministers in the pulpit, nor by votes of congregations, in accordance with their preferences and prepossessions and wishes, it has not seemed to me to be profitable, in discharging my responsibility as pastor among you, to take up the time allotted to preaching the Gospel in discussing them.

I am not therefore about to burden myself or amuse you by attempting to-day to "reconcile," as they say, Religion and Science, in the story of the first chapter, nor with proving that Moses was or was not the original composer and sole inspired author of the narrative of the second chapter. Suffice it to say that I have not yet seen any sufficient reason to let go my personal faith that Moses truly wrote the book of Genesis substantially as we have it.

On the other hand, I see no gain either in refusing to admit that Moses probably used, in telling the story of the creation and the deluge and other ancient events, such earlier records or verbal traditions as he found handed down in the families of Abraham and the patriarchs of the primitive times, just as St. Luke explicitly states that he made use of all the information he could collect in writing his Gospel. And indeed any one, even an English reader, may observe differences in the style and wording and general order of narrative in these early chapters, such as are most naturally and rationally accounted for by supposing that the book was composed in this way—none the less true, and in no degree altered as respects trustworthiness, or affected in proper religious interpretation, because preceding generations of God's people had known and used these accounts.

I have gone into these matters at such length because in proceeding to consider the subject before us, even in most practical ways, it will presently come in our way to observe that Chapter 1, together with the first three verses of Chapter 2, probably forms one of these complete ancient traditions, while the remainder of Chapter 2, along with Chapter 3, is another, originally separate from and wholly independent of the former; so that we have in these chapters two distinct accounts of man's creation which supplement each other. They were placed side by side here, as I

believe, by Moses the servant of God; and both certified to us and recommended for our instruction by him.

But leaving now these matters of literary criticism, and attending only to the religious lessons of the text, concerning which there are no controversies, observe how it is said:

I. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. It is simple and sublime, with every mark of truth about it. How different from the childish cosmogonies of other ancient peoples—of the Hindus, for example—one of which tells us that out of the wide-spreading stagnant waters there sprang up first a lotus flower, and out of the blossom of the flower there presently emerged the God Brahma, who thereupon proceeded to create the universe, and in particular the human race out of parts of his body. But whence the stagnant water, and whence derived its power to produce the lotus flower, has not occurred to them to ask.

The account in the Holy Scriptures begins with God, as already existing from eternity in the fullness of His divine being and attributes, blessed, sufficient in Himself, with all his perfect wisdom and knowledge and omnipotence. God created the heaven and the earth, and after this wise set them in order. The earth was waste and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the breath of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

And so day after day, or epoch after epoch, God "spoke and it was done." "He commanded and it stood fast."

"Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters."

"Let the waters be gathered together and let the dry land appear."

"Let the earth put forth grass and herbs yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit." "Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven." "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living animals, and let fowl fly in the open firmament of heaven."

"Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, and creeping things and beasts after their kind." "And it was so." "And it was so." "And God saw that it was good." "And God saw that it was good." "First day," "second day," "third day," "fourth day," "fifth day," "sixth day." And God blessed them.

What majestic stride it has! Is it poetry do you think? If it be, then it is that kind concerning which Mr. Emerson impressively said: "Poetry, if perfected, is the only verity: it is the speech of man after the real and not after the apparent." For here indeed we have reached reality, the profoundest verity in the universe, viz: that all things about us, and we ourselves, are creatures of Almighty God. "It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves." Neither we, nor the race of which we come, nor the ground on which we dwell have original existence. We are God's work.

Whether all were made in six brief days, or in six ages, whether created instantaneously complete, or by protracted processes of evolution; still all the same, the wisdom was His, the design was His, the purpose was His, the will to create was His, the efficiency was His. And so we declare first of all in the Creed; I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. This is the fundamental truth concerning us in both physical and religious regard.

Therefore while we adore Him for His majesty and wisdom and power, let us recognize our own humble place. We cannot have things as we would. We must accept them as God has appointed them. And resistance is vain. It is a great calamity not to learn speedily this lesson, that resistance is vain. This thought has recalled to my mind what Dr. Horace Bushnell, in his "Christian Nurture," counsels concerning the training of a little child's will. He says the true problem is not to break the will but to bend it rather.

"The child has no force, however stout he is in will. Take him up then when the fit (of resistance) is upon him, carry him, stand him upon his feet, set him here or there, do just that in him which he refuses to do in himself—all this gently and kindly, as if he were capable of maintaining no issue at all. Do it again and again as often as may be necessary. By and by he will begin to perceive that his obstinacy is but the bluster of his weakness, till finally, as the sense of limitation comes up into a sense of law and duty, he will be found to have learned, even beforehand, the folly of mere self assertion."

So let us learn, by looking at the truth that we are creatures, in the hands of Almighty God who made us, the folly of self assertion. He, if He pleases, can turn us all to destruction, simply saying as is written in the Psalm of Moses: Return ye children of men.

When men are cast away at sea, driven to take to their small boats from their burning or sinking ship, having no more the help of God's wind to drive them, or food and drink which he created to support them, but being left entirely to their own strength to deliver themselves, when one day has passed, and another, and another, they reach a feeling, I suppose, of their own littleness, but no more than is true, and moreover as true of us now and here,

as of themselves away there. When Lieut. Greely's party returning from their Arctic search reached the point where the relief vessels were to meet them and convey them home, and found none. (You remember one vessel was crushed by the ice and the other, without even landing stores, turned and hastened back out of the danger.) When, waiting at the place until the Arctic Winter and the long Northern night had closed in with no relief appearing, and when it was sure that none could then appear for nearly another year, and they with little food left, and all around was only a desert of snow and ice, doubtless they felt their impotence extremely; but no more than was true, and no more than is now true of us.

When Captain Nelson, in the heart of Africa with Mr. Stanley being weakened by sores and starvation became unable to travel further, and accordingly had to be left by the river's edge, in the dark forest, there to wait until the stronger members of the party, themselves nearly famished, could go on and find inhabitants and bring food back—when he sat there, or lay there, twenty-three days unable to move, and with no subsistence except leaves and a few fungus—when of the fifty-two men left with him only five remained, and two of these were dying (for to such extremity he became reduced) he doubtless felt very little pride or sense of independence. Yet the utmost that he felt was within the truth, and within what is true of our case here and now.

And when you and I shall come to the hour of death, as before long we shall, and find then we have no longer power over our breath, no "power to retain the spirit and no power over the day of death," and that "there is no discharge in that war" (Eccles. 8:8). I think we shall not likely be proud. "Why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" "Tis the wail of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath."

From the blossom of health to the paleness of death, from the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud. Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud? Come, look my fellow creatures into the hole of the pit whence we were digged. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground."

II. But there is also another side to our case. It would be simple cruelty, the slaying of the slain, for me to be exhibiting to you these things if there were not, and if I were not able to point it out to you. This preserved fragment of ancient story proceeds, "and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

The account of the creation in chapter I. gives some particulars not mentioned in this of chapter II., which we may with best advantage recall at this point.

In that we observed the majestic march of God's creative work. Let there be this, let there be that; let the waters bring forth this and the earth bring forth that, and in every case the thing commanded was promptly so. But when the beasts of the earth and the cattle have been made, there comes a kind of pause, and what bears the appearance of a consultation; whether between the persons of the divine Trinity or between God and His attending angels one dares not confidently say, but a consultation at all events. "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness." "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him."

It is as though—if we may compare great things with small—some one skillful with tools should sit and whittle carelessly out of wood, toys and curious carvings of various kinds, one after another and toss them away, or pass them to the company looking on; but after a while, turning to more serious mood should say to them, now let us build a house. So God having made many lesser things, turned as we were to more serious mood and said, now let us make man in our image and after our likeness.

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground—as regards our bodies we are like those lesser things; but here now appears the difference by these words: and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

There is a peculiarity about this expression in the original language which neither of the English versions has attempted to represent. The word translated Life is plural, and literally rendered the text reads: breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives. I have not been able to put from myself a feeling that a certain mystery was intended to be veiled in this. Often one hears the words next following, viz: "And man became a living soul," quoted as indicating man's superior nature. But I am persuaded that is a mistake. That same expression which is rendered here Living soul, has been used four times already in chapter I. (verses 20, 21, 24, and 30); once applied to the swarming creatures of the sea, and once to those that creep upon the earth, and manifestly is simply the Hebrew formula for distinguishing animal life from vegetable life. But under this other expression, Breath of Lives, there seems to be a making of room for a larger and fuller participation in life than the animal attains to, that is to say for spiritual life.

You will have observed that the second chapter story of the creation says nothing concerning man's bearing the image of God; by this expression, however, it would seem to reach the same point.

For that image and likeness are manifestly not in respect of our bodies; God is a spirit. In our bodies we resemble the creatures that had been made before; but in spirit, in immortality, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, in capacity for dominion—that is for freedom to control ourselves first and then others—in these we were made like unto God himself, and by means of these it is we are capable of knowing and communing with our Creator. Let us embrace the privilege, let us aspire to the dignity accorded us, and "lay hold on the life eternal."

III. There are two other matters treated in these accounts of the creation which it may not be amiss to call your attention to before leaving them. They are the conclusions of the two stories respectively. (1) Let us take that at the end of the second chapter, the story of the creation of woman by God's taking of the man's bone and flesh and making for him, out of them, the companion which he needed. A most strange and surprising procedure, truly!

The man had been provided with a suitable dwelling place in the garden which the Lord God himself had planted; had been instructed and commanded concerning keeping it, and concerning his own conduct; but it was "not good that he should be alone."

Shall he be given the companionship of the other creatures then? Successfully they were brought to Adam; he observed them, remarked their differences, their qualities, their admirable capacities, and gave them names; yet still there was not found an help—a companion—suitable for him. One must be made. Accordingly, from his own body a part, we are told, was taken, in order that the two might be veritably bone of bone and flesh of flesh, one flesh.

Is not this, my fellow-men, designed to teach us (and does not our Savior in quoting it, Matt. 19: 4, 5, intend to indicate as much) that the companionship of husband and wife should not be like the gregarious companionships of the lower creatures, but a certain more intimate and spiritual companionship? A man shall therefore "leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife." They are "beings together of the grace of God." Let us, therefore, learn from this story of the creation to consider the union of husband and wife a more sacred thing than seems now to be the fashion with some.

(2) The other matter I asked leave to speak of is in the conclusion of the first account (chap. 2: 1, 3). "And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."

Rested—not because He was weary, but because He was satisfied. "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." The creation was good enough for Him; it ought to be good enough for us. Yet some creatures, with shameless audacity, assume to sit in judgment on what their Creator has made. The thing formed says to him that formed it: "Why didst thou make me thus?" Let us not be guilty of this folly.

On this day of rest, sanctified to us now by the completed work of redemption, a more amazing exhibition of Divine goodness than the original creation itself, yet on this day still remembering that, let us devoutly contemplate the divine majesty of our Creator. And in particular: 1. Recollecting that we are ourselves of the dust of the ground, "O, come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker; for He is our God. And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart."

2. Let us accept with grateful eagerness the high rank he has accorded us to bear His likeness and to be His children.

3. Let us hearken reverently to all His instructions and commands given us in the Holy Scriptures, and make haste to do them. This we owe to Him, as being His creatures; and this we owe to ourselves, also, in respect of our own welfare. Because, when He made us like Himself, our Creator regarded our everlasting blessedness along with His own; and what time any man breaks away from God he breaks away from his own well-being also, which, in the case of all here present, I pray may God forbid.

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